

10. WOLF SKETCH

Audrey is placing cologne boxes on the shelf. She doesn't see him approach.

"Has he been by here recently?"

She jumps, "I haven't seen you in a while. I thought that maybe you died."

"If I had have, they would have sent someone else. Do you think that you could help us with a sketch?"

She wants him to go away. It has been so nice not to have him coming around and asking stupid questions.

"I can't remember that much about him."

"You never took him back to your place."

"Am I a suspect?"

The cop looks down. "No, but maybe he is."

"I'm sorry but I can't help you." She goes back to her boxes.

"I'm not going to go away."

"This is harassment. If I need to, I'll call store security."

"So they have him on security cameras?"

"I don't know. I'm not even sure when he came in here."

He is relentless, "But you know that he made it in here."

"You were the one who had a photograph. Now you're asking me about a sketch."

"I want to make sure that it's the same guy."

"You just want to do a sketch of some guy who came in here. What about the guy in the photo?"

"He's got a record."

"And that's who you're looking for? Or is it the guy in the photo? Or who is it? Tell me who is it?"

"Are you asking the questions?"

"For all that you seem to know, you seem to be at a dead end."

"It's really up to me to decide that."

"I guess that it is. So what have you figured out?"

"That I want to stop him before he strikes again."

"And you said that months ago." She is challenging him. "What's happened since then? Nothing. Maybe he's left town. Or the guy that you're looking for never was here. Or you have no idea what you're looking for."

"You're a little bitchy for so early in the day. I don't want to see you at night."

"Is that some kind of offer or something?" She smiles.

"I never took you up on your last offer."

She corrects him, "I didn't know that I made one."

He gets off on the give and take. It's a game. She is starting to seem more cooperative.

"So you're willing to help me?"

She leans on the counter, "There's not much that I can do to help at this point."

"You did see him."

"Some guy came in here and talked to me months ago. Have you noticed how many

people are in here right now? I'm fairly observant. I remember faces. But I am never going to remember this guy after so much time."

"You're not protecting him."

"Not at all. You're going to have to find someone else to help."

He has his suspect. And he believes that the only reason that Audrey is still alive is that she didn't see that much of him. Or she is still helping him hideout. For whatever reason, he doesn't want to let this go. But if she won't help him, then there is really nothing that he can do.

Denise is at the police station trying to help them come up with a sketch. She claims that she escaped from his place before he did her any harm. There are contradictions in her story. But it serves the interests of the detectives. This may be the prime suspect.

Denise is calm and deliberate. She remembers a great deal about that night. Even the apartment where she was taken. Although that turns out to be a useless lead. He had broken in to the apartment earlier in the night while the occupant was gone for the weekend.

There is a level of power that she now has. She can take the image of an innocent man and attach a story to it that seems to implicate him in a crime.

"What are you trying to do? Let this guy off?"

"What are you talking about?"

"Denise is pretty shaken up. So what if all the details in her story don't jibe. The basic idea is there. And it's same as a slew of other cases where this guy was involved. She is the first positive ID."

"She may be making it all up just to get back at her ex."

"Her ex could be the guy."

"And she's been protecting him all this time."

Denise is answering some questions.

"He had this low sexy voice. I really thought that he was a nice guy. And then he showed me this other side of his character."

Things are starting to become a little scary.

"Are you going to get me that drink that you promised?"

"You're seeming a little jumpy. Settle down and we can have some fun."

Sometimes things get out of control. She just switches to automatic pilot. It has put her in some messy scrapes before. But she claims to like the danger.

"What made you go back to his place? You didn't even know this guy."

She feels that they are judging her. They don't know what it's like. She hates to be alone. And she can never find the right kind of guy.

She is trying to get close to him. Trying to see if he's the one.

"You seem sort of different," she tells him.

"Is that a complement?"

"In its own way." She smiles. "Buy me another drink."

She feels loose. She has escaped the grind of her day. She is not working now. It is the weekend. She feels a little off the hook.

"You're cute in peculiar manner. I don't know what it is."

Denise is under her spell. She knows that she will hate herself for this later on. But at this moment, this is everything for her. This is her life. And he is interested in her. She takes it

for what it is.

He comes back with drinks for both of them. He has been drinking just as much. But she seems drunk; he seems sober.

“Let’s get out of here.”

“Where are we going to go?” she asks.

“Another bar.”

“Let me finish my drink.”

He takes a cab to his apartment.

“I thought that we were going to go to another bar.”

“It’s late. I’ve got some alcohol at my place.”

He pays the cabbie, and they go upstairs. As long as he has something to drink at his place. That is all that she really cares about.

She is pretty sauced. But that’s the only way that she can get up the nerve to do this.

“Did you sleep with him?”

“I don’t think that I did. He was getting weird on me. So I ran out of there.”

The officer asking the questions seems to believe her. But his partner thinks that she is trying to deal with her guilt.

Later he tells his partner, “This is all pretty flimsy. So what if she can identify this guy. All we have is some vague suspicions on her part. She should have never gone back to his place. I think she’s the guilty one here.”

“Maybe you should listen to her. You just have a way of jumping to conclusions. If she said that something weird was going on, it probably was. Her story matches all these others.”

“That’s the problem. It matches too well. She is making it up.”

“So why didn’t she finger the guy at his apartment. Then we could have pinned the rap on him.”

“She’s messed up.”

“Let’s wait for the sketch.”

The sketch artist is doing his work by hand. Later on he will have her work with him on the computer. But he feels that he has a sixth sense about it, and he needs to work by hand.

She asks him, “Are you a psychic?”

“Something like that.”

They both smile.

“What’s your name?”

“Lenny.” He feels that she’s coming on to him. He needs to concentrate on his job. He finds her attractive.

Lenny prompts her to tell him what the man looked like.

“His eyes were closer together. He gave me the strangest look.” He gave her that look just before he asked her to go back to his place. The look that says he wants to devour her. She has seen that look with other guys. And that turns her on. It makes her realize that the guy wants to go crazy on her.

Lenny asks, “Have you seen that kind of look before?”

“Loads of times.”

He even looks at her strangely. She is getting turned on by the process. Lenny is probing

her soul.

“Are you married?” she asks him.

“No, but I have a steady girl.”

“Maybe we could get a drink sometime.”

“Yeah, sure.” He likes her nonchalance. She seems so casual about everything. He would love to get her worked up.

Denise seems to get off on the attention. All these men are asking her questions. It is very anonymous. But she feels desired. All these cops are excited hearing the personal details of her life. She feels that it doesn't hurt to embellish things a little.

“If I see a guy that I like, it doesn't hurt to get to know him a little better.”

Every guy in the office thinks that she is talking about him. Lenny continues his work.

“What about the lips?”

“You are getting it right.”

She remembers his warm breath on her neck. He kissed her there. It made her wild.

“I really should go.”

“One more drink.”

“I'm trashed already.”

Now that he has her here, he doesn't want to let her go.

She asks, “Don't you wish that there was something more in life. More promise. More hope.”

He pulls her closer.

“What about the hair?”

She seems distracted. “It was like yours. A little long.”

He smiles again. He senses a compliment. “You're free this evening.”

She demurs, “I'm not sure. What do you have planned?”

“We could go out?”

“I thought that you were dating someone.”

Lenny jokes, “You're not going to tell the cops on me, are you?”

“No, I'll leave you to do that for yourself.”

She adjusts her skirt. He looks at her legs. She catches him looking at her.

“I'm not sure that you've got the mouth right.”

He can feel his hands run up her legs. He gets more excited. He reaches to tug at her panties. He can't control himself.

She glares at him, “You're getting distracted. That was the look that he gave me.”

“Maybe we should stop now.”

“Why should we stop? You've almost got him exactly.”

She realizes that his mind isn't on his work. But she doesn't have all day to spend at the police station.

Lenny tries some shading under the cheek bones.

“You are getting that perfectly. He could go from nice to mean in a second.”

She is sitting extra close to him now. The deep flower scent of her perfume is kicking into high gear. She puts her hand on his shoulder.

“You do have the touch. I can feel it.”

He has a big smile on his face. He holds up the picture.

“This is him.”

“It’s as if you know him.”

And Lenny believes that he knows him. He almost feels that he is looking in a mirror.

Lenny comments, “This is what he looks like when he can smell his prey.”

“You know about it too well. Is there something that you sense as well. Can you feel the heat? Breathe deeply, Lenny.”

His heart is racing. He touches her hand. She moves it away.

“I guess that I’m all done here.”

“What about that drink?”

“I think that I just got a little carried away.”

He shakes her hand, he doesn’t want to let it go.

“You have nice hands, “ he says.

“Lenny, you’re not some kind of wolf.”

“I’m just doing my job.”

Guys always fall over her. They try to remain aloof. Then they just come apart. It freaks her out. But it gives her a charge.

“I may look easy. But don’t let looks fool you. I’m very choosy.”

She is about to leave when the detective calls her back.

“I saw the sketch. It looks great.”

“Have you seen the guy before?” she wonders.

“No, but we’ll find him.”

For the time being, she feels relieved.

Denise tosses and turns in her bed that night. She is never going to get to sleep. She is a hostess at a restaurant, and she works lunch tomorrow morning. She wants something to quiet her down. That is why her life is on the edge. That is why she is so sensitive to touch. That is why she is losing her mind.

Denise doesn’t avoid trouble. She has an uncanny way of finding it.

The only thing that gets her to sleep is a bit of a fantasy about Lenny. As she finally drifts off she glimpses a sliver of fear. But she is so deep in the excitement that she ignores it.

The next day she is still a little groggy. She has slept just enough. What finally awakens her is that remnant from the night before a flash of his face. It only becomes more complex as the day wears on.

“Did you like my self-portrait?”

“It does look a lot like you.”

“Do you really do all those things to girls that they say you do?”

“You heard about my reputation.”

“Is it true?” She moves closer to him.

“Everybody gets a little crazy after a few drinks. It’s not as if sex is a pretty thing.”

She is staring in his eyes. She can barely wait for the moment.

“I just wish that there was something more perfect in my life.”

He frightens her a little.

“This will be perfect.”

Lenny has unleashed something more than powerful. It is a nightmare that pervades her every waking moment. And she embraces the thick fog of the day. She loses herself in the rings of darkness.

She needs a drink after work. She wants to see him.

He looks her deeply in the eyes. "Aren't you afraid of me?"

"Should I be?"

Of course. She has never been this terrified before. It is an incredible turn on.

She wants to know more. "What are you going to do to me?"

"What do you want? What's your fantasy?"

She has played these games before.

"When I work myself into a frenzy, I can hardly recognize who I am."

"Is that what you depicted in that sketch. Is that why no one else recognized you?"

He smiles.

"I guess I'm just a good artist."

He has imagined sketching her from the moment that he first saw her. His hand is so steady in this vision. As it traces her contours, it captures all the wildness of her body. They are alike. Neither has been able to control the urge.

I can teach you things.

"I think that they have to invent crimes to explain the things that we do to ourselves willingly."

He is confused by her last remark, "That sounds a little freaky."

"Haven't you been saying the same thing over and over again?"

"I've been playing a game."

"You play it so well, Lenny, because it's real. You know that it is. I can't do a thing to stop you. I can't stop myself."

"Is this what happened that night?"

"That night is tonight."

"I don't know how you ever escaped. No one else has."

"Love is that kind of challenge. It destroys you. It eats you up. Only the very few are able to walk away."

He tries to maintain a proper image, "That sounds so cynical as if you are reading from a script."

"Quit pretending with me. You could be the one."

"What are you talking about?"

"I saw the sketch. You can't fool me. Not in the least."

"I was playing with you."

"Lenny, stop that. I know who you are."

"And what's that?"

"You're one sick puppy!"

"You don't know how sick I am."

She wonders how far she can push. She's been in a game of give and take like this before. She wants to remain on her feet. She works to strike the balance.

"Is this how you normally get off?" she asks.

“There is little that is normal with me.”

She knows how it gets. She lives on a diet of regret. She tries to mark each pitfall along the way. It’s all part of her pilgrimage. Lenny does an even better job of marking the way. That is his skill.

“What about your girl?”

“She’s an idiot. She doesn’t understand. She wants everything to be so nice. Charming. And she only sees me how she wants to see me.”

“I guess that we all get like that.”

“In a sense we do. But you seem to know what makes me tick. Because it makes you tick that way too. It’s about pushing yourself out so far that you begin to act in an almost unrecognizable way. You almost crave the scandal.”

She seems unsure about what he is describing.

“Do you have things that you’re ashamed about?”

“What about you? Why are you with me? How do you think that this is going to turn out?”

“It’s going to turn out in such a normal way. You’ll curse the both of us for the outcome.”

“And you’re telling yourself that. How many men have you taken home from this bar?”

“Are you calling me a whore?”

“Not exactly.”

“It’s always one at a time. And each time, I tell myself that he’s the one.”

“And when you look at me, what do you see?”

“I tell myself that you could be the last.”

He takes pride in the feeling that he conveys.

“You make it so easy to be with.” he tells her. For that brief moment, she seems to be telling him that they don’t have to do a thing. So they don’t. They don’t even speak. They sit there looking in each other’s eyes.

He almost feels that he is quenching this deep thirst. Everything is automatic. He doesn’t give it a second thought. He is totally methodical. He finds himself doing things that he can’t even imagine. But it seems so natural.

She wants to cooperate with him. She does her best to encourage him. But this has little to do with her. She is just here. She doesn’t resist. It is too easy.

“I’m not sure what I’ll be able to say about this afterwards.”

“Do you feel guilt?”

“All the time. And then not at all. That would only get in the way.”

He wants nothing to get in the way. He does his best to let nothing get in the way. They both cross this wall and after that anything goes.

“I could report you!”

He defends himself, “I really did nothing. Nothing that you didn’t ask for.”

“You shouldn’t be allowed to get away with something like this. Not someone in your position.”

“I’m an artist. I show people what they want to see.”

Lenny is demonstrating something that cannot be shown on the page. It cannot be

spoken. But she feels it deep in her soul. From the time that she first saw him, she knew that he was the one. And she played cat and mouse with him.

He assumes that he has her on the run. Nothing could be further from the truth. He is weak. Nothing like the man from the other night. Lenny play acts. And when things finally get too close, he becomes a little boy and begs to let up.

She expects it all to be full throttle. And she just lets loose with everything that she has.

“Do you ever hate yourself for what you do?” she asks.

“You seem to suggest that I don’t do much of anything.”

“We had our fun. I just wonder if it’s worth it for you. I mean you risk so much. And you really don’t go that far out. Maybe in the eyes of the world, it would seem weird. But you’re pretty tame. Almost a tourist.”

“What do you want from me? Do you like some guy with his hands around your neck. Do you want to be pinned down? Tell me what you like.”

“No, Lenny, you weak excuse for a human being. You need to tell me what you like. Do you get off on hurting people? Does cruelty turn you on? How far are you willing to push it before you say when. You pride yourself upon being an upstanding member of the community. But that’s why you really feel comfortable among the scum of the earth. People who hate themselves. Because they tell you how far to push. And you don’t stop. Because they’re used to that sort of thing. What does it take Lenny until you just let go completely? Until that animal in you just takes over and wreaks havoc on the world around you. Tell me, Lenny. How far do I have to push?”

“You said that it doesn’t work that way.”

“Wrong game, Lenny. You’re not going to get off that easily. I’ve got your ticket, and it couldn’t be more perfect. What do you have left in your? Or are you spent? Are you good at dishing it out, but when it comes to taking it you just rush right back to Momma. Who’s going to help you now when you scream in the night.”

“You’re the one who’s one sick puppy.”

“I’m just doing your sketch. I look for guys like you. The mild-mannered types who are protecting their future. And I level you all down to where you belong. Kiss the ground, Lenny, because that’s the highest that you’re going to make it up tonight.”

“I could do things to you.”

“You already have. Take your best shot, pretty boy because it’s all downhill after this.”

“What do you want? Some edgeplay. More degradation.”

“I want something that you can’t give me. I’m looking for a man.”

It appears that she has him just over the precipice. Is she afraid that he’ll crack? He is doing a wondrous job at containing himself.

“You’re not out of this yet.”

“Are you threatening me, Lenny?” She doesn’t let him phase her. He hasn’t shown her a thing.

He can no longer rest on his imagination. She has exhausted all his skills. She is making him feel like an amateur.

“Are you going to bark, little dog?”

“I’ll do what I’ve got to do.”

“To whores like me. Is that your precious line? Do you need me to furnish you with dialogue. To put words in your mouth. Do you think that I’ll get off if you hurt me a little more. Let me sketch you his portrait. And we’ll see if you measure up. Isn’t that what you’ve tried to do. This is your little test to see if you’re a real man. And you’ve tried pretty well to be good at what you do. But what do you have left. You know that he was just getting started at this point. I could barely keep up. You know what that means. Have you ever known that in a man? Have you known that in yourself?”

She keeps on with the tirade, “It’s as if he never lets up. He’s thinking about it every second of the day. You know what it means to be spot on every second. How do you perfect your game so that’s all that you think about?”

“Are you even close, Lenny? What do you have when the day is low over the horizon? When you’ve spilled every ounce of energy that is in you. What can you find, little boy? What can you do to perk me up?”

“I was in the presence of greatness. And you tried to capture that in your sketch. That is why you did the self portrait, little man. That is all that you can do. You’re a fucking sketch artist, not Michelangelo. And I was in the presence of something glorious. You have no glory, my man. You lust after that.”

“That is why you sought me out. That is why you worked by hand. You thought that you could outdo any machine. Here you are, lover boy. Give me a kiss! Give me a kiss.”

She has really pushed him. When he gets out this far, he likes to pretend that none of it happened. He hates her for everything that she is. More than that, he hates her pity. He hates her self-loathing. He wants to puke all that out of his system.

He needs a drink. He really needs to forget that any of this happened. He needs to clean himself up. He wants a shower.

He takes a drink at a bar near his place. He notices someone that he knows. A local artist of some celebrity. Of some success.

You piece of shit. I could show you little man for who you really are. Does that hurt enough. Not enough. I could pull tighter. Can you breathe? Can you breathe, little man?

He needs a couple of more drinks before he understands what he has to do. He breathes in deeply. He needs courage. He is having difficulty facing himself. He has never felt so humiliated.

“You’re doing this to me because you’re jealous of what I have.”

“I’m doing this to you because you are nothing. I’m doing it because I can do. I am getting off on hurting you.”

“Why are you doing this to me?”

He still marvels at the inexhaustible appetite of Denise. She never let up for a second. He can’t think about her. He doesn’t want to think about what happened back there.

One is never enough. Never enough for him. That is what makes him a hunter. Worse. He does it for the sport.

“I know everything about you. I know how to disable your security system. I am there deep in your mind. You have locked me out because I am just like you.”

“I am different than you because I appreciate something that you can’t understand.”

“Can’t? I’ve been crazy like you.”

He can barely stand up now. He is too useless to do much of anything. He is just close enough to his place to crawl home. He closes the door behind himself and has a long shower. Tomorrow, no one will ask him about any of this. He will hide the sketch and go about his business.

For the time being, he breathes a sigh of relief. He was almost detected for the first time. He can go back to Eva, and she won't know the difference. No one will.

What about when the feeling comes back? When he has to start the whole cycle all over again. The roaming in the night. The constant search for someone just like him.

"No one is really like you."

"I'm starting to understand that."

She glares at him again, "No, you're not. You really don't have a grasp. You're not that good. Most people who try this are consumed. You are a bit of an amateur. A dilettante."

He wants to shut her up. She is enjoying how he is exposing himself.

"Why did you bring me back to your place?"

"I knew that I could beat you at your own game. I wanted to see your face when you realized that you didn't have that much to give."

"So now you see it. What next?"

"That's not for me to say. I can send you on your way. And I get off scot free."

"Aren't you afraid what I might do to you?"

"You've done it all already. Get dressed, and get out of my life."

"What about the sketch?"

"Keep it. Use it how you might."

"Did it do the job?"

"It made you think that you had something to offer.

She sleeps soundly tonight.

Audrey hasn't seen her man in months. Even the casual interruption from the police officer hasn't changed things.

"Are you Audrey Biensaison?"

She turns to look at a man at the counter.

"Do I know you?"

"I'm taking over the police investigation." He shows her his badge. "Someone has finally given a positive ID of our guy. We've made a sketch. Can you take a look at it?"

He puts it down on the counter. She tries to hide her surprise. She doesn't say a word. She passes it back to him.

"Nothing?"

She shakes her head, "Nothing."

He wants to know more. He has some questions to ask. He doesn't want to get involved. He only asks questions.

He can't do it at his place. He needs to find a neutral location. He knows somewhere that might be perfect. The people have left for the weekend. He even knows where they keep a spare key. This is going to be too easy.

He is a very dashing guy. He usually gets what he wants. He is never too ambitious. He never works out of his league. He is a pro. This is going to be his legacy. His perfect job.

He picks her out of the crowd. It is almost as if she has his number. And she is all too willing to oblige. He never forces her. He doesn't do anything that she doesn't want. She is game. He doesn't even ply her with liquor. She is the perfect competitor.

It is only a little ways into the game that she really that it is too late. He is playing for keeps.

It has been a long day for Audrey. She hates to be reminded of her past. She has done some things that make her ashamed. She thinks of none of it as illegal. It's not even that she is protecting anything. If she has her suspicions, so be it. There is a box of cologne on the counter. She puts it back on the shelf. She puts the inventory sheet back in the drawer. She adjusts her hair.

I squeeze and I squeeze and I squeeze. Does it hurt yet? I squeeze and squeeze and squeeze. Does it hurt? Do you like to play rough?

Take a breath and hide fucker, I'm coming for you. And when I find you, it is going to hurt like hell. One hand on your neck and the other, a fist in your face. I am going to smash you up. Just splattered away!

She is all finished for the day. Everything is put away. Nothing is out of place. Nothing to think about.

"One thing, Mam. I have a picture to show you."

"You showed me the sketch."

"No, that was the other one. I want you to see this. He just did this yesterday."

She tries to look away.

"Take a good long look."

"That's not the Wolf. That's the Shepherd!"

I know what you're doing now. I can see your face.